

An introduction to our strategic refresh

A strategic refresh

While our mission to be a university for Tasmania and which makes a distinctive contribution from Tasmania remains the same, much has changed since we set our strategy to guide us between 2019-2024. We have navigated a highly disruptive pandemic, the global headwinds and challenges we face have grown, Artificial Intelligence has arrived in force, and the higher education sector faces the largest set of changes in more than a generation. But we are no less resolute about our identity as a university or our determination to make a difference.

In the face of these challenges and changes, thanks to the determination of so many people we have made much progress against the objectives we set ourselves in our Strategic Plan 2019-2024.

When we look to our students, we take pride in the significantly increased access to the University for Tasmanians through initiatives like our Schools Recommendation Program and broadening our scholarships. A revised curriculum with some strong distinctive place-based offerings has seen our interstate student numbers grow markedly, and more Tasmanian school-leavers are staying home to study. There is great teaching and great teachers across the University. The result is that our student outcomes are some of the best in the country, reflected by top-tier graduate income and employment rates amongst other things. Our regional presence has developed with a broader set of offerings, new facilities, and a reversal in trends of declining student numbers in the north-west and north compared to the south. While COVID significantly disrupted our international students, we are successfully moving to a far greater diversity of students.

With our research, there is a deep satisfaction in research that we know matters and the joy that is found in discoveries. The formal measures tell a strong story. We have seen continued increases in funding, reaching the highest levels we have ever had. Our research is increasingly sustainable with more of its costs being met from the grants we receive. These excellent outcomes have come from a focus on what we are truly good at, finding new ways to see our research have impact, and pursuing programmatic research characterised by interdisciplinary collaborations.

For everyone, this has been a challenging time and we have much to do. At the same time, our commitment to safety has seen a considerable and sustained improvement in key safety measures. These now sit well below national and sector averages, including an extended period of no lost time injuries. We have also significantly reduced casual employment rates, as well as our gender pay gap. This gap now sits well below the national average and is the second lowest in the sector, with gender pay equity now in sight.

Our foundational commitment to sustainability, expressed in part through the way we have organised around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), has seen us ranked

2nd in the world overall in 2024 in the Times Higher Education Impact rankings, which measures impact against them, and number 1 in the world in Climate Action for three years in a row, 2022-24. That is a result of work right across the University, both academic and professional.

We now need to refresh our strategy to navigate this next era. There are important continuities we need to maintain between where we have come from and where we need to go. We are still place-based. Our commitment to excellence in research and teaching has not changed. We have a passion for our regions and their success. Connection to community is critical because it is the community we serve. We are still working to be a right-sized university, not one constantly chasing growth. We always strive to ensure a concern for people is at the centre of our decision making. In the implementation of the previous strategy, sustainability in the broad sense of the SDGs emerged in practice as a powerful governing idea, which helped organise many of our strategic efforts. That conclusion is the starting point for this next version of our strategy.

We are not setting a completely new direction. We are in an era that needs to be about skilful adaption to a world that is constantly changing, rather than seeking to outrun it by pursuing massive changes and disruptions. Central to refreshing this strategy has been the input of staff and students across the University. The overall strategy and ideas are shaped by that thinking and the ideas that emerged in those conversations, which can be found summarised in our document here.

The strategic context, themes, and targets in this strategy document are intended to inform the teaching, research and community engagement that is undertaken by our academic units and supporting portfolios. This strategy is not intended to be an exhaustive list of initiatives and actions across the institution. Rather, it is to provide a principle-level basis for local decisions about direction, priorities, and how we work.

The refreshed strategy sets a long-term direction. Its horizon is the next 25 years because much of what we need to do will take time and sustained effort. We are in an era in which the needs of our community and world requires deep engagement, serious ambition and enduring commitments.

Strategic Plan

2025 Refresh

MARCH 2025

We acknowledge the Palawa/Pakana people of Lutruwita (Tasmania) and the Gadigal people of Sydney, the traditional owners, and custodians of the land upon which we live and work. We pay respects to Elders past and present as the knowledge holders and sharers. We honour their strong culture and knowledge as vital to the self-determination, wellbeing, and strength of the community. We stand for a future that profoundly respects and acknowledges Aboriginal perspectives, culture, language, and history.



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Our plan on a page

► Our Mission

To make a difference for Tasmania and a distinctive contribution from Tasmania:

- By fostering the intrinsic value of learning, discovery and creative expression and delivering the workforce and professional training that Tasmania and Australia need.
- Working in partnership with community, industry and government to achieve bold changes in relation to education, health, productivity and climate and give expression to our Tasmanian stories which enhance life for Tasmanians and the world.

► Our Strategy

- Grounded in Indigenous excellence and knowledge.
- Organised around sustainability.
- Characterised by a distinctive student experience and high quality teaching in all we do.
- Committed to programmatic research excellence and impact.
- Ambitious about equity with excellence in the context of an integrated education system.
- Regionally networked 'with' and 'in' the community.
- Collectively stewarding our staff experience and University economics.

► Our Way of Working

- Prioritise safety and inclusion.
- Create a culture of trust and collaboration as we organise around purpose, empowerment and regions.
- Achieve sustainable workloads alongside sustainable economics operating at a sustainable scale, and committed to environmental sustainability in our operations.

2050

Tasmania and the world need to make a huge transition between now and 2050 if we are to have a sustainable, inclusive, prosperous, and stable society. Universities have a vital role to play in providing the people and knowledge that will make that transition possible.

If we are to play that role, we need to be a place of hope that nurtures the belief that this better world is possible despite the challenges we face. We need to be places of action where we play our role to make that future happen and to live tomorrow today.

Our opportunity as a university is to work with others to make Tasmania one of those unique places in the world, towards which people look to understand how to navigate their way to a better future. We are part-way there. As a university, we can do so much more to make Tasmania that kind of place. This strategy aims to provide us with a sense of direction about how we can play that role.



Students on a field trip to the Tamar Wetlands, North Tasmania. ▲

Our foundations

While we look to the future, our story begins in deep time. Lutruwita has been sustainably stewarded by Aboriginal peoples from a time when their country was still part of the great southern peninsula of the continent.

It was the end of the last ice age – the world-changing climate change witnessed by Aboriginal people – that created this island. We acknowledge their enduring ownership of this place and the vitality of Aboriginal culture.

As we work together to create a sustainable future, we need to draw on their deep wisdom to live with this country today, to hear the truth about history spoken, to ensure justice for the wrongs of the past, and to see their enduring sovereignty is recognised into the future.



Palawa Opening at Inveresk campus, Launceston. ▼

Our University community

Universities are a special form of community. Our University is constituted by students, staff, the University Council and, in fullest expression, our graduates as well.

Our students are students, not customers or clients, for here learning is a collaborative endeavour, not a commercial enterprise. Our connections are relational not transactional. It is why we embrace approaches to working together like 'students as partners'. Equally, we seek to give expression to collegial qualities of the staff community through structures like the University Senate. In this strategic refresh we look to ways to strengthen that character of the University.

The unique character of communities has led universities to have a vital role and unique responsibilities as civil institutions in free societies. Our commitment to inquiry wherever it takes us is protected by our values of academic freedom and free speech and the self-governance that is integral to securing those freedoms.

As humanity faces the challenges of the future, the role of university communities is increasingly important. They build the adaptive capacity of a civil society. They strengthen our individual and collective ability to inquire openly, engage respectfully and work creatively with differing values, worldviews and ideas about how we respond to the challenges we face while we pass on our knowledge of the human and natural worlds to the next generation.



Inveresk campus library, Launceston. ▲

Our strategic context

Our strategic context is defined by our place, the rapidly changing and challenging world in which we live, and the new directions for higher education in Australia set out in the Australian Universities Accord.

Our place and mission

Our place is the starting point for our strategy, as it is for our mission. We are a University *for* Tasmania, and we draw on what is unique here to make a distinctive national and global contribution *from* Tasmania. It matters that we take the time and space to reflect on our place, its strengths, opportunities and challenges. We may all characterise these in different ways. Our strategy offers one interpretation, which doesn't intend to be definitive but rather to signal where our strategic conversations start.

Our purpose is defined by our place. We were created to provide higher education for the islands of Tasmania, and all the members of the rich and varied communities that call Tasmania home. Therefore, our mission has always been broad. We affirm the kind of civil society Tasmania wants to be by making learning, inquiry, critique, creativity, thought and imagination the lifeblood of our community. In equal measure we serve Tasmania by providing the skills and knowledge that are needed for the jobs and industries of today and tomorrow. Ours will always be a dual role.

Place shapes our identities, interests, values and worldviews. The history and character of the islands of Tasmania are a constant reference point, from the ancient wisdom and culture of the Palawa/Pakana people through to the unique geography and ecology of lands and seas, the evolution of our society, its institutions, and our communities. That rich understanding of our place and its people is how we answer what it means to be *for* or *from* Tasmania and what it means to work *with* the community and each other.

Where we work off our island, whether on the mainland or in other countries, we seek to bring our Tasmanian commitments and character to serve the communities in those places.

The nature of our place brings great strengths and challenges.

There is a deep commitment to environmental sustainability amongst many people here. In many areas, we lead the world. The remarkable natural qualities of Tasmania and the deep desire to protect them meant this was the first place in the world where the Green political movement began. It has seen 50.4% of our land protected, much of it as World Heritage area. We are one of the few jurisdictions in the world with a net zero carbon economy powered by nearly 100% renewable energy.

We have strong communities, each deeply connected to their place. While Tasmania is an island, distances still divide us and each part is unique, with different social, cultural and economic challenges. It makes us a place of places. We need to care about each part, not just the whole. People want to be a part of and contribute to each of these communities. People's passion for their place sometimes meets with widely varied values and visions of the future, which can divide us deeply. The value of a university to build capacity within the Tasmanian community to engage respectfully and constructively is central to a flourishing future of our island.



The Hazards, Freycinet, East-Coast Tasmania. ▼

While we have strong communities, they are also small. Size can be an advantage but also a challenge. With little more than 500,000 people and a rapidly ageing population, finding the resources and the expertise to do all that Tasmania needs from that population alone, not least in higher education, can be hard.

Although we are small and often understated, Tasmania does have a remarkable record of making globally distinctive contributions across the arts, the sciences, policy, and commerce. We are quietly proud of our part in that story, and we aspire to contribute much more to that record.

A time of global challenge and transition

While we have an island home, its past, present, and future are shaped by global forces. Aboriginal people in the history of these lands brought knowledges of the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world here long before the waters rose. Colonisation brutally visited the island and laid the foundations for our current society. Since then, we have become integrated into a global economic system.

Now we are living with the global consequences of that economic system. For all the extraordinary material and technological progress it has brought, that system has given rise to climate and ecological crises, and ever growing inequalities and instability within society. We need to tackle these challenges in a world where we now face headwinds of many kinds, from geopolitical competition and resource scarcity to an ageing population and low productivity.

These global forces shape our place in Tasmania. They contribute to the deep inequalities in education, health, and wealth that we experience, and the fact that our productivity

is low, and our environment is being harmed by climate change and loss of habitat. Many communities still suffer from the legacy of large enterprises being shut down by the forces of globalisation and not being replaced.

Neither locally nor globally are these circumstances sustainable. In a very short time, the world and its places like Tasmania need to make a transition to be a zero-carbon, circular, regenerative, productive, and inclusive economy and society. We have chosen to describe that transition in terms of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We have done that not because they are a perfect measure of sustainability but because they have become the currency of cooperation to meet our global challenges.

As we navigate these challenges, we need to build on Tasmania's great strengths in being a global leader in making these transitions from creating a zero-carbon energy system to protecting our natural environment.

We also will need to harness powerful new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) to ensure they serve progress rather than undermine it. As we do that, we need to strengthen the deep ethical instinct in Tasmania to ask, just because we *can* do it does that mean we *should* do it? Across the breadth of this agenda — technical, creative, human, and ethical — universities like ours play a central role.

We know the transition will require new forms of knowledge about how we live sustainably on the planet and that our greatest resource for this task is a deep dialogue with first peoples everywhere and, for us, with the Palawa and Pakana people of the islands.

Our publication 'Point of Choice' provides a full account of these global challenges.

Greenhill Observatory, Bisdree Tier, Tasmania. ▲



The pressing transitions we need to make in Tasmania

Forces global and local combine to present Tasmania with a series of very pressing challenges. It is important for us to identify the ones we want to play a central role in tackling because as a university we can't do everything. We need to create focus if we want to see impact.

We have chosen to make four challenges our organising priorities: education, health, productivity, and climate. And to add to our priorities a fifth great task, which is to nurture our Tasmanian stories in all their forms to ground us in our place and help us imagine our way into a more hopeful future. Some might see tackling these issues as matters for government alone. We think the strength of liberal democracies is that they can harness the full breadth of society to tackle the complex issues we face. In a society and economy where new knowledge and skills are needed to tackle pressing, multifaceted and apparently intractable problems, universities have a large role to play if we are to achieve aspirational goals.

Of course, for all we can contribute, progress depends on long-term partnerships – with community, with industry, with government, and with other educational institutions. Those partnerships need to be founded in bold and shared aspirations.

It is all too easy to be sceptical or cynical about bold aspirations. But universities bring out the best in themselves when they galvanise the energy, commitment, and imagination of bold and, at times, even unthinkable goals. In challenging times universities need to be places of possibility and hope. They need to speak from the liberating idealism of the youthful energy that is drawn to them, and which should always be cherished.

Bold goals also avoid the counsel of timidity to only try to change what you directly control. When you are committed to working *with* community, government and industry, goals can be as broad as your partnerships.

Although we are pursuing these goals *for* Tasmania, they are all critical national and global issues. Each presents important opportunities to make distinctive contributions *from* Tasmania. As we tackle some of them, we may find ourselves becoming a national provider of the knowledge and skills. This has already occurred, for example, in areas of health and medicine like nursing and paramedicine, and in the maritime world. We will welcome those opportunities to expand our ability to make a difference. Our focus on impact has made us a global leader. For three years in a row, we have been ranked number one in the world for climate action in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings scheme. We have risen to be highly ranked overall and in many of the other individual categories, which are based on the SDGs.

The fact that these are complex societal challenges means we need a holistic approach. While there is important technical knowledge needed to improve health, education, environmental and other outcomes, they all require changes in our social, economic, and political system. We are fortunate to be a university with expertise across all of these domains, through our staff and also our students, including our Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students.



O Week, Podium Building, Melville Street, Hobart. ▼

Equally, often the most powerful force for change is not policy but imagination and creativity — these can prompt us to see the world differently. Compelling works of literature, art, drama, and music can change minds, attitudes, and perspectives in ways little else can. These are strengths we have, which have an integral role to play.

Our critical role to support these vital societal transitions requires the work we do across the humanities and social sciences. Our commitment to make these societal transitions and our vision of what is possible are founded in the rich and deep understandings of human life and society, nurtured by the strength of our scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. We need our classicists, historians, literary scholars, philosophers, and social scientists to give us access to the hard-won insights into the human condition, with all its opportunities and vulnerabilities, and to reflect on the challenging questions that need to animate any period of major societal change.

For that work in helping us adapt to change, we always want to affirm the intrinsic importance to our very identity as a society and as individuals of curiosity-driven inquiry into the human and natural world. The ability to be a society that values and commits to nurturing and growing the store of human knowledge and wisdom as an expression of what it is to be a human and good society is central to the world we are trying to preserve and secure for the future.

As we think about these tasks of meeting the challenges of the future there are many ways we could characterise the themes we organise around. The ones we have chosen reflect many conversations about how best to organise our capabilities and structures to tackle the challenges we see. There is no perfect answer, but choosing a structure to organise our efforts will help us to make a difference. One topic we will need to continue to debate as to whether it should be a theme is inequality. Each of our current themes seeks to tackle inequality and they all exist at least in part because of it. However, there may be other ways to address it that we also need to explore.

As we describe these challenges it would be easy to see them as deficits. Instead, we see them as challenges to be tackled, which are born of the way our current global systems operate rather than failings of a particular place or people. As we tackle them, we will amplify what works while seeking to change what doesn't.

Image courtesy of the artist (Kevin Perkins) and Bett Gallery. Photo: Jack Bett. ▲





Taroona Primary Bush Class, Hobart ▼

Education

More than ever before our future depends on a population with levels of educational attainment growing in line with the rapidly changing requirements of the workforce for ever higher degrees of knowledge and skill. The Accord highlights that to meet future workforce needs, we need at least 90% of Tasmanian students to receive a compelling and relevant education that sees them complete year 12 to a level that enables progression to university or TAFE. Today we are a very long way from this level of attainment. Students studying subjects which need to be built on throughout secondary school, like mathematics, physics, chemistry, music, and languages, are in dramatic decline, and the absolute numbers studying these subjects are small. Many of these STEM subjects are vital to Tasmania and Australia's long-term productivity, prosperity, and supply of new high-quality jobs. Compounding the challenge, Australia-wide standards in STEM education have been in long-term decline. Equally, if languages and music were no longer taught in Tasmanian schools, which we are on track to see within the decade, we would culturally and in many other ways be much the poorer for it.

We also need to address the needs of those adults who in previous years were not adequately prepared to participate in higher education; this shows up in Tasmania currently having a bachelor's attainment rate below the national average, and significantly below in our regional areas. This means providing offerings that enable life-long learning and upskilling so that people have an opportunity to participate and succeed in higher education. Transforming educational outcomes doesn't just matter because it gives every person the best opportunity to fulfil their potential and to be equipped to navigate the challenging era, but because it is the single most powerful lever we have to address the serious structural inequalities in the State.

Those inequalities are especially evident in differing life expectancies. Overall, Tasmania continues to have the second lowest life expectancy of any Australian jurisdiction after the Northern Territory. Within Tasmania, life expectancy by region spans 20 years, from 67 in Bridgewater-Gagebrook to

87 in New Town; these places are only 20 kilometres apart but differ significantly in socio-economic status and rates of educational attainment. In Bridgewater-Gagebrook, the percentage of school leavers to progress to higher education was 6.3% in 2023, five times lower than the rate in New Town of 33.6%.

Poorer health, income and life expectancy are all correlated with lower levels of educational attainment. Comparing Australians with a bachelor's degree to those with no post-school qualification, those with a bachelor's degree have a 10% lower comorbidity rate, are 33% less likely to have diabetes and earn 65% more per week.

We know this can be changed. Education systems around the world have turned these sorts of results around. Universities have a vital role to play, especially in a jurisdiction like ours where we train most of the teachers and other professionals that work across so many of the socio-economic issues that affect educational attainment. For that change to happen we need to join with other champions in the community to elevate the value placed on education and to lift the sense of aspiration and possibility. Placing that value on it means caring about education from those first vital 1000 days of a child's life right through to the end of our days. Our commitment to education is not to a few post school years but to the whole of life.

To tackle these inequalities and give Tasmanians the opportunity to flourish in challenging times while meeting the future skill needs of our communities, we have a clear objective aligned with the Universities Accord to see 90% of Tasmanian school students well prepared for tertiary education by 2050. We also need to work with TasTAFE to meet the overall Accord target of 80% of the working age population having a post-school qualification by 2050.

In responding to these challenges we will be addressing SDG 1: No Poverty; SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions; and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities.



Health

If we are to tackle these inequalities and see all Tasmanians live a long and healthy life, we also need to see a very different health system — one that is focused on delivering services that meet the needs of our community. Primary and community healthcare systems have not evolved to meet the changing healthcare needs of the community. This has resulted in an overburdened acute care system that is unable to effectively deliver timely or planned care. The result is not just people dying younger than they should in our regions, it is rates of chronic disease well above the national average and costs that are straining the State budget.

Yet Tasmania is a place with great opportunities to create the foundations for good health through a healthy diet, exercise, social connection and engagement with the outdoors.

To realise that possibility we need to build an approach to health that treats it holistically and recognises its critical social, cultural, behavioural and economic determinants. That starting point means tackling inequality and discrimination in our society more broadly, and the ways it is embedded in our health system will be integral to our effort to improve outcomes.

In our communities, the way we think about our health needs to be as much about sustaining and improving wellness as it is preventing illness. Supporting that change, our health system needs to give a far greater focus and priority to primary and preventative care. Improving health outcomes is a mission as important for our social scientists and economists as it is for our health professions. When any form of health care is required, it needs to be holistic, coordinated, team-based, patient-centred, and evidence-based. If we can achieve our educational goals and build this approach to health, then Tasmania can have the healthiest population in the country.

The health education and research we do across the University in pursuit of healthy longer lives in Tasmania can provide for better lives nationally and globally.

Our objective is to narrow substantially the life expectancy gap so that Tasmania reaches the national average by 2050, and in doing so reduce the gaps between Tasmanian regions. We don't just want longer lives, we want people to be healthier and see the burden of major chronic diseases (measured using disability-adjusted life years lost) fall below the national average by 2050.

In responding to these challenges we will be addressing SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being; SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities; and SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.



Students at Home Hill Winery, Ranelagh, southern Tasmania ▼

Productivity

Tasmania's productivity lags behind the already low productivity of the nation. Productivity is critical to seeing incomes improve and surpluses created to invest in education, health, and climate transitions.

We can address the challenge in part through improved participation in education. We can also build productivity through the content of curriculum, for example by embedding a focus on innovation and simplification in our business programs so our graduates are equipped to drive those improvements. Our focus is not on just any productivity improvements. Our concern is the gains that can come from the transition to a more sustainable, equitable and inclusive economy. That means the productivity gains we pursue need to reduce inequality rather than increase it. We need to see that the greatest gains are made and shared with those on lower income levels.

Importantly, if the productivity gains that we enable, like developing new technologies, reduce the need for less skilled labour, we need to ensure our work supports the reskilling of people so they can move into higher paying roles. As a university working collaboratively with TAFE, we are uniquely positioned to ensure we support an equity enhancing approach to productivity gains. Whatever role we play, we need to make sure our social scientists, ethicists, and economists reflect together on the holistic nature of the social and economic changes in which we are involved.

Increased productivity means we need to see Tasmanian industry transform. Key existing major industries like agriculture, aquaculture, and mining need to continually lift their productivity while simultaneously becoming deeply sustainable. We need to be the advisors, researchers, and partners for those changes. We need to remember that it will be our technical and scientific knowledge that will be vital. Equally, the creative arts sector has rich opportunities to grow and add significant value to the economy as it enriches society.

While existing companies and industries need to adapt, critical to driving productivity improvements is the creation of new rapidly growing business. They are the business that create the most new jobs and quality jobs. They attract capital and talented people. They create the new companies that replace those being overrun by competition. They are born by solving problems that matter to people. They are commonly founded on the sort of technological capabilities and breakthroughs you find in universities. Tasmania needs far more of them and a thriving start-up sector. We are well positioned to contribute significantly to this new enterprise creation through the commercialisation of new knowledge and building of entrepreneurial skills.

All of this will be greatly assisted by the sort of policy and legal reforms that we are well positioned to develop and recommend.

Our objective is to see Tasmanian productivity exceed the national average by 2050, which means over time the gaps in income and wealth between Tasmania and the rest of the nation will close.

In responding to these challenges we will be addressing SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure; and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities.



Climate

Our climate is in crisis. It is a crisis with the gravest of implications for our natural and human world, exacerbating the ecological crisis and challenges that already exist in our natural and production landscapes. We are seeing the impact of a changing climate in Tasmania — from the ever-increasing damage from floods, fires and storms, to having some of the most rapidly warming waters in the world, and droughts caused by changing patterns of rainfall to the threatening changes to our fragile world heritage ecosystems. We are seeing the human cost, with those most vulnerable already suffering disproportionately. That is only set to worsen.

We urgently need to create a climate safe world — a world where we understand how and why our climate is changing and the impacts on our island home and beyond, where we act to arrest the change, and mitigate and become resilient to the harms we can't stop.

With distinctive capabilities like our Antarctic and Southern Ocean program, we are very well positioned to make leading global contributions to understanding global climate change. Our deep geospatial and ecological capabilities mean we can help the world understand the implications of these changes for the urban and natural worlds.

We are also positioned to respond.

We have expertise in saving species threatened by the changes to our natural world on land and sea, and knowledge about how to regenerate already damaged terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Our engineers can make our communities more resilient; our fire scientists can make our towns and cities safer and our wild places less vulnerable. Our accountants are global leaders in how to account for climate and ecological impacts. Our lawyers can design the new regulatory regimes. Our economists, sociologists and public policy experts can advise on the necessary complementary changes that will be needed across all those fronts.

In all the work we do, our aspiration is to move beyond mitigation to the development of regenerative practices where we are thriving as part of the natural world, including in those times when more extreme events occur, rather than seeking to limit the harm it does to us.

Ultimately, we want to arrest the change and stabilise our climate through the rapid transition to a zero-carbon economy and society. We are ideally located to lead that work. Tasmania is one of the few places on the planet that has already achieved a net zero-emissions profile which, when combined with abundant renewable energy assets and deep commitment to sustainability, provides an opportunity to embrace and promote a truly climate positive strategy.

Tasmania has maintained net zero-emissions because our forests remove more carbon from the atmosphere (about 13 million tonnes per annum) than we emit from our cars, trucks, industry, agriculture and other processes (about 8 million tonnes per annum). While this positive outcome sets Tasmania apart, this has not come about through active changes to bring down Tasmanian emissions, as the amount of 'absolute' (or 'gross') emissions that Tasmania produces has not changed significantly over the last 30 years. While national emissions have declined by 6% over the last 12 months, Tasmania has increased its per capita emissions in all categories except waste. Further, the carbon removed by our forests is expected to decline over time as many plantations mature and are harvested simultaneously, highlighting the need to cut emissions. Tasmania can be an example to the world on climate action, but more can and needs to be done. Tasmania needs to strive to reduce gross emissions across the entire economy to maintain our net-zero status and future-proof our industries and the communities that depend on them. The State's renewable energy assets and world-leading emissions profile stand us in good stead to capitalise upon the development of niche zero-emissions technology, infrastructure, and processes, both to grow our economy and make a meaningful contribution to national decarbonisation efforts. We also have important opportunities to capture more carbon through changed agricultural practices, regenerated landscapes, and in the marine world.

We have leading global expertise in engineering, chemistry, and discovering critical minerals like copper and rare earths, which will all be vital to the global transition to a zero-carbon economy. We have a track record in sustainable architecture and design as well as expertise in carbon accounting, natural capital valuation and resource economics, which will be critically important capabilities to drive the transition.

More broadly, the transition will require policy, legal, and social change of considerable complexity. None of it will happen without minds changing through persuasion, diplomacy, and education. We are fortunate to have real experts across all these fronts, who can play an important and necessary role.

Our objective is to make critical global contributions to understanding climate change, especially as it relates to the processes of the Southern Ocean and Antarctic and its impacts on our terrestrial systems, to see Tasmania be a world-leading jurisdiction in moving toward a truly zero-emissions economy by 2040, and to have supported the creation of a resilient Tasmania so the impact of weather events is no greater in real terms than it was in the year 2000.

In responding to these challenges we will be addressing SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy; SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production; SDG 13: Climate Action; SDG 14: Life Below Water; and SDG 15: Life on Land.



Trisha Striker, 2023 Green Cowan Awards nominee. ▼

Tasmanian Stories

We meet these challenges as a university deeply committed to our place. Our place grounds our identity, shapes our values, provides sources of solace, hope and joy. It offers lessons and wisdom, which are vital to all humanity. We give expression to our place in our stories, in our Tasmanian stories, whether we tell them in words, music, film or art, and even in our buildings. They include histories of our complex past, reflective accounts of the realities of our communities and lives today, and imaginative explorations and dreamings about our future. They live in the dialogue between the realities of our place and our imaginations. They matter to us. Those in other places tell us they matter to them.

Our stories can cross social and economic divides. They reveal the diversity and richness of our communities, not least here in Tasmania. In helping us to understand and value our diversity and our common humanity, they can unite us and create the social cohesion that empowers us to resist the local and global centrifugal forces, which can too easily take hold here. They are essential to help the members of our community make sense of and engage with the major changes and transitions that need to take place in Tasmania. They contribute directly to strengthening a sense of belonging and confidence amongst our community and they enhance our wellbeing.

Stories, which are our own, are at the heart of learning to read and write, to perform, to compose and play music and sing, and to make and respond to art. Tales of our places, our diverse realities, which use our names and words can make the undervalued or overlooked feel seen; they can remind us of the intrinsic value of learning, of being curious and creative. That is all-important in a community with low levels of literacy. Where we can help bring these stories to life, we have the opportunity to connect the University with the daily lives of all Tasmanians. As we do that, we help to meet our goal to make the University a more accessible and inviting place.

Stories matter. If we don't remember our past, we don't know who we are and are less able to connect meaningfully with people with different stories. Our histories are our communal memory. Yet, some of our most important narratives remain untold, poorly understood, or fail to capture the true diversity of peoples and experiences that made up our past. There are difficult and dark tales of invasion, genocide and incarceration that need to be told if we are ever to be whole. There are stories from deep time on the Island that need to be honoured, protected, and, where appropriate, shared. Some of those stories may prove foundational to our future identity and sustainable life on these islands.

Stories are a Tasmanian strength. This island has produced remarkable writers and critics, composers and musicians, artists, historians, architects, and other storytellers. We must create spaces for fresh voices to emerge and tell new stories. It matters to our future that more extraordinary Tasmanian stories are told and that they reach more people, that every Tasmanian feels connected to our stories. These stories are not just Tasmanian tales. They are Tasmanian realities that we must address. They are not there to be appropriated for cultural expressions, entertainment and imagination. Their expressions of our realities reflect our society and environment, they drive science forward, and just as importantly, affect and shape the development of a resilient and enlightened Tasmanian community.

We have a role to play to strengthen the culture and the industry of Tasmanian stories – their creation and their sharing. We too build on strengths. We are a university fortunate to have our own music, theatre, art and writing programs with compelling writers and significant historians. They all take their place in strong creative communities often richly peopled with alumni from our programs.

In Tasmania our stories are important to our economics as well as our identity. We recognise the importance and value in strengthening the way our creative output can support the livelihoods of our creative communities and everyone who works with them.

Strengthening our relationship with those creative communities and exploring the possibilities of deeper partnerships will be an imperative. Finding new sources of funding outside traditional areas for the creation of these stories needs to be a priority.

We need to remember the power of stories is not confined to the Humanities, Creative Arts, and Social Sciences but must be a current through all disciplinary knowledges and practices, so that we communicate truth and meaning effectively, for and with our communities. Creating compelling narratives as we navigate the great transition our Tasmanian and global society needs to make will be pivotal to that journey.

Focusing on stories reminds us not just of the importance of the stories themselves but of the importance of learning to listen to them, to share them, and to perform them. How that telling and listening happens matters. It needs to lift us up because it is done with compassion and a desire to connect and strengthen community.

Nurturing the creation, sharing, and performing of Tasmanian stories needs to be an organising priority for us across the University.

Our objectives are to see a consistent increase in the publication and performance of Tasmanian stories in all their forms, to see all Tasmanians empowered to know and engage with their stories and stories from elsewhere, evidenced through increased engagement in creative community events in Tasmania, and to ensure, as part of our contribution to the necessary truth telling on this island, that the untold stories of our past are both told and publicly remembered.

In responding to these challenges we will be addressing SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 5: Gender Equality; SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities; and SDG 16 Peace Justice and Strong Institutions. At least as importantly, we will be addressing the deeply human foundations needed to progress any of these goals, which aim to provide people in their particular communities with a sense of identity, purpose, meaning, and hope.

Bachelor of Music student Elijah Davies, performing jazz at The Hedberg, Hobart. ▲



Australia's transition to a universal and managed higher education system

Central to Australia's efforts to adapt to our changing world is the reform of our higher education system. These reforms offer the prospect of greatly supporting our Tasmanian mission, with their focus on inclusion, accountability, and our ways of working.

Inclusion

Having signalled that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples need to be at the centre of higher education systems, the starting point of the Accord's redesign of the system is that by 2050, 80% of jobs will require tertiary education.

To prepare Australians for this future, many underrepresented groups will need to be brought into the higher education system and, as outlined previously, schools will need to see 90% of their students ready to go on to enter and succeed in university or TAFE. In practice, this means we are moving from a mass to a universal tertiary education system where, essentially, just as children go from primary to secondary school, they will go on to tertiary education.

We know what a difference meeting that goal would make in Tasmania to achieve better and more equal lives for all.

A universal system that aims to include people with a diversity of needs requires a needs-based funding system. The Federal Government's Accord plan aims to do just that.

Today, virtually everyone with the qualifications to attend university is offered a place. For tertiary education participation to grow, pathways programs will be very important. These programs enable those adults who are not prepared for higher education to get the skills they need to participate and succeed. The funding of these programs is a central feature of the architecture of the Accord reforms.

The Accord also recognises that creating access to education requires it to be present in communities, especially in significantly underrepresented areas like regional Australia. With increased funding for community Study Hubs and teaching regional students, universities' physical presence in communities is set to increase significantly, as tertiary education becomes as integral to communities as school education.

With changes that are as ambitious as they are necessary, the Government proposes we move from our current market-driven higher education system to a managed one. International students will be part of that managed approach to help Australia have a more balanced migration system.

The changes in goals, funding and the management of higher education are the most fundamental shift in the sector since the reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s when the move from an elite to a mass higher education system began.

For Tasmania, these changes should be very positive. Realising those educational goals would transform lives and economic outcomes in Tasmania. They are changes that are very supportive of mission-driven universities like ours, where we already actively manage our University to deliver what the State and nation needs from us. The change in funding is very welcome because we already meet a greater diversity of deeper needs than most universities albeit without the funding system to support it.

Accountability

We need to recognise what a profound shift a managed system will be. Many of these shifts strongly reinforce our mission to be for and from Tasmania.

As the single university in Tasmania, it won't just be a choice that we serve the State, it will be an objective to which a regulator holds us accountable.

A managed system also raises the bar for attracting students from outside Tasmania, whether they are coming to the island, or we are teaching them at our Rozelle campus in New South Wales, or online. In a managed system where there are universities around the country, the strongest justification for funding students from elsewhere is where our offering is truly distinctive and can't be obtained where the student is from. The premium on distinctiveness, which is already a fundamental part of our strategy, has become critical. For us, it is even more important because, with such a small population in Tasmania, we need interstate students to ensure we have the critical mass to sustain important areas of the University.

Ways of working

The reforms also recognise that some universities like ours operate more like a small university system as we seek to meet very different needs, from supporting the transformation of the healthcare system, to providing an outstanding music or creative arts education. In other countries an education mission as broad as ours would probably be delivered by between 2-4 smaller universities. This is an invitation to us to be more innovative in how we operate.

We welcome that innovation because the previous era of reform sought to create mass higher education by making massive universities. We are an average size Australian university but that makes us five times bigger than an average US university and three times bigger than a UK university. To manage this huge scale, the Government has used regulatory and legislative controls and reporting. Our view is that this push to scale and management by regulation has contributed to universities being too large, bureaucratic, hierarchical and complex. Too often this leads to workload issues for staff, low levels of engagement with the overall 'university', risk aversion, a loss of agility, a concern for inputs and process rather than outcomes and an inward rather than outward focus as we seek to manage all that complexity.

The strengths we bring to the task

We are fortunate to have great strengths as a University to bring to these challenges. They are central to defining who we are today, and they are what we need to build on for the future.

Our place is a strength. We live on a remarkable and distinctive island with unique natural and Indigenous heritages and a recent history that encompasses the extremes of human experiences, from genocide and the inhumanities of transportation to being a place of scientific exploration and unique artistic expression and social innovation.

We have remarkably talented people who are incredibly committed to their work, their colleagues, Tasmania and their communities wherever they work. We have some of the most innovative teachers you will find anywhere. We have cutting-edge researchers and research strengths in areas that are critical for Tasmania and make great use of Tasmania's location, while contributing significantly to global priorities. We have musicians, composers, creative artists, and writers who all make distinctive contributions to Tasmania's ever more highly recognised and globally significant artistic scene. We have professional staff who care deeply about the experience of staff and students and find innovative ways every day to improve it.

We have outstanding students who achieve at the highest levels and make contributions, both here in Tasmania and around the world, as distinguished as those from any Australian university.

Our distinctive offerings not only serve Tasmanian students well but attract very talented students from around Australia and around the world. We have campuses in three of the State's regions and in New South Wales, which continue to be significantly strengthened. Our Burnie and Launceston campuses now provide world-class facilities, which also deeply reflect the local character of their place.

We have alumni right across Tasmania and around the world who are deeply committed to Tasmania and the kinds of values that are central to our mission. Our alumni and others who support our mission and values provide ever greater philanthropic support to the University.

We also have the privilege and responsibility of being the sole higher education provider on the island, which enables deep and longer-term partnerships with the community, industry, and government.



UniSport Rowing team. ▲

What is our strategy?

The purpose of our strategy is to help make decisions that enable us to coordinate our efforts to deliver on our mission within the constraints, opportunities and challenges presented by our strategic context. Where the challenges are big and could be tackled in various ways, and resources are limited, aligning our efforts is particularly important. Strategy is about making choices and setting priorities.

The following strategic themes are intended to provide broad direction for decision-making across the institution. What this looks like in practice needs to be defined by the purpose of that part of the University. Sometimes that will be at a broad level such as in the case of Health and Medicine, where its many parts need to be coordinated to help meet our key objective around the transformation of the whole healthcare system. In other cases, it will be at the academic unit level such as Engineering, where it needs to determine what these strategic themes mean for the future engineers we produce and the engineering research we want to do. For most of the University, there should only be two levels of strategy – the whole of university strategy and a local level strategy.

Mission focused

Our mission is to be a university that makes a difference for Tasmania and a distinctive contribution from Tasmania to the world. It is the starting point of our strategy. It is a shorthand statement to remind us of what our focus should be. In the Accord era this will be more important than ever because, as we observed, being for and from Tasmania is not just what we choose, it is what we will be accountable for.

How well we deliver it by way of our teaching and research will determine our funding and success as a university. The centrality of the mission means *purpose is what we test all we do against*.

When we talk about purpose, we don't mean broad vague objectives, which could justify almost any activity. We intend it to mean a very clear outcome, which enhances life in Tasmania and/or in the world, which we can practically organise ourselves around.

Purpose shapes who we want our students to be, the experience we want them to have and why we want to teach them. In a managed system with domestic students, that purpose is clear as we fulfil our dual role to foster the intrinsic value of learning, discovery and creative expression as well as to deliver the workforce and professional training that Tasmania and Australia need. In Tasmania we need to be particularly clear that we are delivering the workforce Tasmania needs not just in numbers, but with the particular capability required to meet Tasmanian community needs.



Dr. Swee-Hoon Chuah with students at the Behavioural Lab, Hobart. ▼

Purpose needs partnerships. It means working *with* people. Deep engagement with community, industry and government will be critical to our success in delivering much of our mission. *Creating enduring partnerships needs to be a central strategy of our mission focus.*

The theme of purpose will govern not just our approach to domestic students but international ones as well. Our focus in Australia needs to be to attract international students to what we distinctively offer so they are here for a unique education experience rather than migration opportunities.

More broadly, we want to see the education of domestic and international students alike enriched by having a modest number of students from a diversity of countries across all our courses. Balance and diversity will not only enhance student experience but also improve our resilience against international shocks, which in the past have disrupted inflows of students from a small number of countries that represented a high proportion of our international student cohort. Given our strong sustainability commitments and distinctive offerings, we should explore ways to offer our courses in other countries where doing so would advance our joint aspirations for a sustainable world.

When it comes to research our purposes need to be equally clear. Where it is focused on impact we encourage people to use our **Tasmanian Societal Impact Model**, which is recognised as a sector-leading approach globally, as a starting point for defining what the purpose is for our work and how we can deliver on this purpose.

► **Goals and accountability:** With domestic students, our goals in relation to our professional courses are to consistently meet a scorecard agreed with the Australian Tertiary Education Commission to deliver the workforce Tasmania needs, and, at the societal level in Tasmania, to meet the targets for broadly educated citizens and creative professionals as agreed to through the Accord process. In the national markets we serve, we expect this will include a goal to sustain above national average employer satisfaction levels.

With international students our goal is to achieve a diversity of quality students across a wide range of our courses. Overall, we aim to have about 20% of our total cohort being international students, and no more than one third coming from any one country. Where we deliver in-country, we will look for clear alignment of our offerings with our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. We pick up our research goals in the section below.



Grounded in Indigenous excellence and knowledge

If being *for* Tasmania is to be meaningful, we need to begin with a commitment to support the flourishing of Aboriginal people and to honour their knowledges in all that we do. Equally, Indigenous knowledge and practice will enrich our understanding of how to relate to the world and will greatly advance our sustainability agenda. Therefore, we will **prioritise in time, resources, and attention programs to support the educational participation and excellence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and ask all academic units to incorporate an engagement with Indigenous knowledges in their teaching and research programs.** We recognise that for this to occur we need Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders proportionately represented at all levels of the University.

► **Goals and accountability:** We will hold ourselves accountable by ensuring Indigenous students succeed at the same or greater rates than non-Indigenous students and that Indigenous people are represented amongst staff and students in greater proportion than their presence in the general population and proportionately at all levels of the university. We expect to see year-on-year increases in the number of units and University operations and activities engaging with Indigenous knowledges and practices.



Students and faculty gathered at the Riawunna Centre, Sandy Bay campus, Hobart. ▼

Organised around sustainability

Sustainability is a core organising theme and priority for our teaching, research, and the way we run the University.

Where both the world and Tasmania face a huge challenge to transition to a sustainable way of living with the planet in a very short time, we need to make sure it is embedded in all we do. We use the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the framework for organising around sustainability not because they are perfect but because they map the breadth of sustainability (environmental, social, and economic) and are sufficiently used globally that they facilitate the necessary collaboration with other organisations committed to sustainability. Our University is world-leading in sustainability education and research and in the way we manage our operations. Our leadership is the result of the passionate efforts of staff and students across the whole institution, many of whom provided valuable input during the strategy refresh process that has shaped the way we will organise around sustainability in future.

We have a clear aspiration to be the world leader in sustainability education, with sustainability themes embedded across our curriculum supported by innovative and more team-based teaching. Our teaching will have a strong emphasis on learning in the field, workplace and community, cultural sustainability, and equipping our students with the skills and knowledge needed to be the future leaders that will drive the changes needed.

To make sure all our work is mission aligned and organised around sustainability we will shift the focus of our international education to offerings that can support the sustainability agendas of other countries whether delivered as transnational education in country or in Australia.

Our research needs to continue to prioritise our strengths across the sustainability agenda, from tackling climate

change and threatened ecologies to overcoming inequalities in health and education. There was a recognition that to do this we would need to work in more interdisciplinary ways by drawing on all STEM and HASS (Humanities and Social Sciences) capabilities and find new ways of organising ourselves to overcome traditional silos. We should also have a focus on solving Tasmanian challenges first and then applying those learnings globally.

In the operation of the University, there is a strong commitment to moving from being a net-zero greenhouse gas emitting university to being a no-emissions university as fast as possible, as we simultaneously drive toward zero embodied carbon and circular economy buildings. There is a recognition we need to redouble our efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of our transport, not least from air transport and our vehicles. There is a similarly strong commitment to see us accelerate our broader contributions to creating a circular economy to eliminate waste and to tackling food poverty.

Our **Strategic Framework for Sustainability** provides details of how we will continue to put this strategy into action across the institution.

► **Goals and accountability:** We will keep ourselves accountable to the goal of embedding sustainability in everything we do through achieving and sustaining **Platinum Status in the Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System (STARS)** (which covers a broad range of sustainability measures across environmental, social and other domains and is held by only 13 universities world-wide) and continue to be highly ranked in the **Times Higher Education Impact Rankings**, which assess us against the SDGs.

Students on a field trip to the Tamar Wetlands, North Tasmania. ▲



Characterised by a distinctive student experience and high quality teaching

Distinctiveness in content and student experience is what we need to characterise all our courses. Distinctiveness expresses our place-based identity, is critical to delivering our mission and is central to sustaining our student numbers, which is why it is such an important strategic theme for us. Distinctiveness can be delivered through in-person or online teaching. We need both if we are to meet our objectives for participation and to be able to engage students off the Island to have sufficient scale to support our operation on the Island. We recognise that each model of delivery is distinct and, to the greatest extent we can, we should not be trying to do them simultaneously.

What distinctiveness means varies by the purpose of our courses.

Those courses that aim to build the Tasmanian workforce should be known for the distinctive content that addresses Tasmania's needs. Some of those courses may have quite modest numbers of students because the size of the professions they serve in Tasmania is small. It should be our objective to also take advantage of their small size to create unique experiences and strong cohorts. With our larger courses we still want to create a sense of belonging with a cohort committed to a better future for Tasmania and the world to characterise their experience.

Courses that aim to attract students to Tasmania or to our online courses should have an offering so distinctive that students couldn't do it elsewhere. The basis of that distinctiveness is usually going to be a combination of making great use of our place, as well as drawing on the unique capabilities and creative practices of our people and their respective areas of world-leading research, or where we have unique or innovative professional offerings that have arisen from being very close partners with government, industry, or community.

Courses where we aim to serve a national market, such as we have in Health, whether they are offered in-person as we do in New South Wales or online, should be known to provide the best-in-class version of those offerings in content, structure and experience. We see this distinctiveness in our national offerings coming from a commitment to provide innovative solutions for partners with which we have built deep relationships.

Across all courses whatever their purpose and whether delivered in-person or online we see a focus on relationships

as an integral part of creating a distinctive and inclusive experience, connecting students to place and each other. It means we want community and relationships, not individual transactions, to characterise a student's experience with the University, their teachers and their peers. It is why we are restoring a collegiate model of student accommodation rather than just providing 'student beds'.

Our institutional distinctiveness should be visible in the lives of graduates. To help us achieve that objective we have chosen a specific set of graduate attributes, which have given expression to our strategy. We know that continuing to build a distinctive teaching and student experience will require significant evolution of our teaching practices and support for those teaching, to make those transitions. Alongside this professional development we will continuously improve our teaching quality, informed by peers and sector best practices. We will increase the distinctiveness of our courses by teaching outside the classroom, in the field, in workplaces and in the community. Team-based teaching and problem-centred learning will be integral to our curriculum, and innovative uses of technology will offer much richer learning experiences.

The progression of Artificial Intelligence (AI) will have significant implications for how we teach and what students need from universities. We embrace the possibilities of AI to enrich our learning offerings in many ways and the need to ensure our students are skilled in how to use AI ethically and effectively. Equally, we will stay focused on the fact that a university education is learning in a community of students, through relationships with those who teach, and often in place. There is transformative power in the unique relationships created between students and their teachers. So too for the interactions between students from all walks of life, which creates new and often lasting relationships and enriched understandings of the world.

► **Goals and accountability:** We will use the Student Experience Survey benchmarks and ensure the experience we provide is at least five percentage points above the national average and improving until those results are 90% or greater. We will target student employment rates and starting salaries to be above the national average, which will see us contribute to Tasmania narrowing the income gap to the rest of the nation.



Field trip at Cascade Female Factory, South Hobart. ▼

Committed to excellence and impact through programmatic research

Programmatic and partnered research funding is what we will focus on. We have learnt that to achieve the sort of impact to which we aspire, the most effective strategy is to focus on multi-year, large scale, well structured – often interdisciplinary – work that is done in partnership with beneficiaries including industry, community or government. It is this sort of programmatic focus that has been the basis of the significant increase we have achieved in research funding, particularly from research impact-geared funding schemes. Importantly, this approach leads us to access sources of funding outside the narrow pool of increasingly competitive ARC funding, which is also unlikely to grow substantially.

We will still pursue ARC and discovery research funding schemes and the recognition of excellence that comes with them, including contributing to the global store of knowledge, which we know will have an impact now and into the future. Nevertheless, those broader pools of impact-geared research funding schemes are growing because of the massive investments needed to transition to a net zero and sustainable economy, adapt to climate change, and meet the Government's objective to reverse some of the downsides of globalisation by increasing Australia's manufacturing.

An important form of programmatic partnered research is commercialisation. Commercialisation is a vital way universities have impact because it involves transforming the new knowledge we create into highly valued solutions in the form of products and services to problems that need solving. We need to build on our commercialisation successes through UTAS InVent, our internal commercialisation platform, which helps support programmatic commercial efforts and access to long-term funding partners.

The creation of the sort of start-ups that come from university research is vital for Tasmania. They will provide the basis for renewing the State's economy in the face of the competitive pressures of global competition, which are especially felt in regional locations like Tasmania. They provide the greatest source of new high-quality jobs and they attract private sector investment, which Tasmania needs. Innovative new enterprises help to lift productivity of the whole economy, which is one of those transitions we have made a priority. There being no other university on the island, we have a particular obligation to ensure we play our role to see a healthy stream of new start-ups created in and, importantly, staying in Tasmania.

While programmatic research needs to be a clear focus, we will continue to pursue and support creative, discovery and curiosity driven research as an integral part of our dual role. While some of that work might explore territory beyond our areas of strategic or programmatic focus, we know it will thrive best when it is part of a healthy research ecosystem that spans discovery to impact because when that is the case, excellent discovery and impact focused work is an 'and' not an 'or'. In the era we are entering, we need to be especially alert to these false dichotomies if we are to succeed in our mission.

Whatever research and research training we do, excellence needs to characterise it all – it is not possible to have impact in the absence of excellence. We choose to set our standards high because that is the nature of our University. We know that excellence from our researchers, including Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students, is needed if we are to deliver discoveries and solutions that meet our expectations for making a difference. We are also aware that in the highly competitive world of research funding, it will be critical not just to secure funding but doing so on terms that enables the full cost of our research to be funded. We see impact-geared research funding schemes as a key pathway to providing a sound financial base to sustain our research excellence and impact.

► **Goals and accountability:** As articulated in our Academic Capability Framework, we will use our new standards and measures of research quality, performance and impact to ensure research excellence is being pursued and achieved. We will measure our progress on the input side against the goal of 90% of our funding coming from three-year or greater programmatic research and 80% of our publications being in Tier 1 journals or books. We will maintain a rolling average of 10 invention disclosures a year. We will measure our progress on outcomes against our goals for the five major transitions Tasmania needs to make.

Field camp, Antarctic Peninsula (Picture: Mike Bentley). ▲



Ambitious about equity with excellence

We are committed to a pathways program, which delivers equity and supports excellence, that is part of one integrated Tasmanian education system. Tasmania's future requires significantly higher levels of tertiary participation and completion to meet the Accord's objectives, which will be critical to meeting our goals for a more equitable Tasmania with higher productivity levels, improved incomes, and better health.

Given the number of adults for whom the education system hasn't prepared them for higher education, we will need a substantial pathways program, so they have the capability needed to enter and succeed at university level. In a managed system where the number of students we should expect from other parts of Australia will be modest, the students coming through our pathways program will be very important to maintaining the critical mass of students we need to support the breadth of our offerings.

The objective of our pathways program will be to enable students to reach a level appropriate for their entry into first year university. Clear entry standards and a strong pathways program will enable us to raise the average standard in first year classes so we can increase the success rate of students and reinforce our commitment to excellence.

The program itself will need to create seamless pathways with TAFE and school programs, to avoid duplication and competition, so we can create one Tasmanian education system built around making it as easy as possible for students to navigate through it. Part of the program will need to include significant work in partnership across the education system and broader community to engage students with the idea of education and to close basic literacy and numeracy gaps so they can engage with formal education.

Complementing our pathways work we need to deliver micro-credentials and short courses to meet the particular skills needs of industry and community. These courses will be ever more important as the knowledge and skill intensity of jobs continues to grow. For some, these opportunities will be an important stepping stone to larger involvement with higher or vocational education. Therefore, we need to ensure

they are 'stackable' and there is full mutual recognition of these sorts of offerings with TAFE.

A successful pathways program will see us have a much more diverse student population. For them to succeed and thrive in first year courses and beyond, we will need to systematically eliminate the barriers to their success. The starting point for that effort is to design all our units so they are accessible to everyone irrespective of the range of people's physical abilities or their neurodiversity – an approach could be universal design for learning. Our plan for inclusion will start by *ensuring all our units are built around universal design for learning* to support everyone's success in the 'classroom' and *targeting needs-based funding to address the barriers to students starting and staying in learning*. We are committed to continuing to work to develop ever more effective and evidence-based solutions to eliminate barriers to student success.

► **Goals and accountability:** The Accord provides us with very clear goals. We need to work with TasTAFE to see 80% of the working age population having a post-school qualification by 2050 and, as part of that, bachelor level attainment rates rise from 37% today to 55% by 2050. To be on track to meet that goal by 2030 we should see at least 700 more Tasmanians coming to the University each year.

Central to realising that objective and the equity goals of the Accord is to ensure that Tasmanian students from low SES backgrounds or with disabilities are represented in all parts of the University in the same proportion as they exist in the population and that the number of regional students studying in Burnie and Launceston is growing.

But that will not be enough - they also need to succeed so we need to see completion rates rise from 58% today to above 80% while maintaining our quality standards. That is a goal that we will need to meet much sooner than 2050. By 2030 we anticipate completion rates will need to be 70%.



Pharmacy students, Cradle Coast campus, Burnie. ▼

Regionally networked 'with' and 'in' the community

The Accord objective of 80% of people needing tertiary education means it needs to be ubiquitous in our society, just as schooling is, only unlike schools, people will need access to tertiary education throughout their lives, not just at the beginning. That has significant implications for universities. In the era now long gone in Australia where only a small percentage of the population attended them, universities could be 'a place apart' from the community.

We know now that access requires them to be part of communities. Universities need to be places 'with' and 'in', not 'apart' from community. That means we need our campuses and access to our courses and our researchers to be present in the communities we serve, and to ensure that where we have a physical presence we are responding to and engaging with the nature and needs of the community. This is why all levels of government and the University have invested in renewing and relocating our campuses in Launceston and Burnie. We have come to know that even these campuses need to be part of a wider network of physical presences through study hubs in towns and suburbs more distant from our main campuses. Our presence is necessarily becoming ever more distributed.

Even our main traditional campuses have become more distributed over the last 20 years as they have taken on a quality of being 'with' and 'in' community rather than apart from it. As we have discovered the importance of workplace learning for building the high skill levels we require today, and the power of proximity for research, facilities have been moved closer to our partners. We have seen that with health and medicine, marine and Antarctic studies, music and the creative arts, especially in the south of Tasmania. In the north and north-west, we have created new campuses that consciously invite the community 'in' to our spaces.

That trend towards greater need for proximity will only accelerate further, as partnerships with community, industry and government will be ever more important to us in delivering our mission.

The world of online education has accelerated the emergence of a highly distributed University presence. Now for so many people who don't come to campus, they access and experience the University in their home through our online campus. We need to recognise that even today the majority of students experience the University in their home rather than solely on a physical campus.

The reality of what is required today of higher education, let alone where we will need to be by 2050, means that the debate about a single campus vs a distributed university really belongs to the past. We have created distributed campuses and a national and international online presence but never made a strategic choice to operate a distributed university.

Our strategy will be to operate as a distributed university precisely so we can enhance the student experience. Not doing so risks diminishing it because if we focus on 'the true' university experience only being present at one or two sites, then many students spread across our network and online will miss out. That means strengthening every student's experience of belonging and being part of a cohort, creating opportunities for them to engage in the broader intellectual and cultural life of the University wherever they are located, and making sure wherever students are, at whatever stage they are in their life course, they can access places where they can study outside of class, meet other students, and access staff and services.

Often a student's strongest sense of identity and positive experience of the University is with the academic unit in which they study or the college or residence in which they live. Rather than seek to create some single 'university' experience we should seek to strengthen that local experience of it.

We need to remember that in making these moves we are in many ways connecting with the foundation of universities not denying them. The roots of the idea of universities in places like Bologna, Paris, Oxford and St. Andrews are of universities that are distributed through their towns and where a student's primary identification is with their academic unit rather than the central administrative entity which is the university. The difference today is that we are making universities present in the community for everyone, not just to be homes for a few.

To be present in and with the community means we need to approach the island as a whole. We also need to connect Tasmania with the work we do in Sydney and other places on the mainland. We seek to do that by operating our campuses as a 'network' rather than pursuing a 'hub and spoke' model. Through operating as a network, we aim to distribute our university capabilities across the island and to provide homes for research and teaching in those locations that best suit that work.

Our whole of Tasmania commitment means we aim to make available across all our Tasmanian locations the educational opportunities that will enable people to live the lives of their choice. We aim to provide that through equivalent educational opportunities. We recognise that the nature of those opportunities will at times vary to reflect the very different contexts of our regions from the size of their populations to the nature of their workforce needs.

Working 'with' the community on the transitions Tasmania needs to make by 2050 means we recognise the State's future hinges very significantly on the depth and breadth of leadership at all levels in our community and its culture and capabilities. We embrace the opportunity to work to support communities to develop the leadership, culture, and capabilities they need. To do that work means we need to think well beyond the traditional categories of courses and research. We need to explore what more innovative approaches to community and leadership development could look like at local and statewide scales.

Integral to making those transitions are deep partnerships with government, industry and community to pursue long-term goals. The well-structured and resourced partnerships the University has with the State Government and industry in the areas agriculture, fisheries, and the marine environment have been very successful. They are models of what working together can look like and we aspire to strengthen and broaden those sorts of relationships.

► **Goals and accountability:** In relation to campuses our goals are to ensure our students report a positive experience of each of our campuses that is well above the national average of the national campus experience survey and that we see year-on-year increases in the number of community members visiting and utilising our campus spaces.

In relation to working with the community we aim to increase the percentage of our research funding that is managed through long-term partnerships with government.

Collectively stewarding our staff experience and University economics

The structure of higher education and its funding have put constant pressure on staff experience. The full cost of teaching and research has not been funded, which has put universities under constant pressure to grow revenue and find efficiencies. That funding pressure has been even greater in universities like ours which are average in scale but have broad missions to provide the wide range of courses our communities need, in multiple places, to a diverse cohort of students while maintaining world leading research capabilities.

Universities in regional settings like ours have sought to manage that challenge by focusing on students and staff and minimising their investment in systems and infrastructure. Over time, that only adds to the financial pressures universities face and diminishes staff and student experience.

In an era of tailwinds, universities have been able to reduce some of this funding gap through the constant growth in domestic, and particularly international student numbers. The move to capped domestic and international student numbers means even this solution is no longer available.

However, the transition to a managed system does provide us with the opportunity to move to a model of shared responsibility for our economics and our staff experience, which should enable us to improve both. Economics and staff experience are integrally linked and find their expression in questions of workload and wellbeing.

In a managed growth system where there is an agreed level of student load for a set number of years, it is possible to plan both the economics of the University and the workload of staff, so they are more sustainable. To start with, individual academic units of the University don't need revenue targets because student load will be a matter of institutional negotiation with the funding body, which will set overall student load levels. Of course, it matters greatly that we create a compelling student experience, produce successful graduates, and that our courses are attractive because if we don't meet our agreed load targets then funding will decline. The best way to ensure that goal is met is to focus unambiguously on the quality of our teaching and learning.

While it is a managed system it is still one designed for 'growth' – it is just that growth will be planned rather than the result of simple competitive market forces. We will need to be very thoughtful to ensure our courses and offerings are designed to attract and retain those new students entering the world of tertiary education if we are to fulfill our mission.

Currently our university economics can be very complex because of the mismatches between what we get funded for and the actual cost of teaching students plus the fact that research currently gets heavily cross subsidised from teaching. With a more planned system and funding better aligned to the cost of what we do, it will be possible to move towards a simpler formula that ultimately underpins economic and workload sustainability.



STEM workshop, Philip Smith Centre, Hobart. ▼

The simpler 'right-size' formula has four elements to it.

The first part is to ensure that we achieve a sustainable balance between the number of units and the times we offer them, the size of our classes, and the number of our staff. Integral to finding that balance is that we need to have sufficient students in each unit to cover the cost of the teaching and the service contribution people make as an integral part of their role, and to make a proportionate contribution to all the University costs. That proportionate contribution includes those costs associated with attracting and supporting those students, attracting and supporting staff and their development, maintaining our infrastructure from buildings and libraries to laboratories, meeting our many regulatory and legislative obligations, and engaging with the community.

If we get those ratios right, then staff have the foundation for reasonable workloads and the ability to offer high quality student engagement, and the University has sufficient income to be sustainable. However, if we have too many units or classes that are too large relative to our staff numbers, workloads become unreasonable and time for student engagement is strained. Similarly, if there are too few students in a unit it will need to be cross subsidised by other units which will then need to have a much higher ratio of students to staff or staff to units than is ideal.

What is important is that appropriately empowered academic units can control the key elements of this formula and respond to their particular evolving circumstances through the way they design their courses and allocate staff to teach them. While it will take some time to unwind the approach we currently have and there will be complexities created by the gradual implementation of new student funding models, our objective is to move towards this simpler, adaptive and more devolved participative model for managing our economics and workloads.

There will at times be pressure to offer courses or units that are important to Tasmania but which we can't deliver economically. Our first response needs to be to seek to find a way to offer what is needed whether through a different type of offering, additional state level funding, or through partnership with a university off the island. Where no such solution can be found we need to make a very careful decision about the merits of cross-subsidising such an offering and to recognise that our capacity to provide such cross-subsidies is very limited.

The second is that on the research side, we need to minimise any cross subsidises of research from teaching, because cross subsidisation creates pressure to have large classes or to increase the number of units people teach. We need to ensure the costs of research projects are as close to fully funded as possible so that we can sustain our research excellence and impact. Fully funded means that any costs of research, including the percentage of staff time paid for as part of their role, is covered by grants, partnership ventures and/or other forms of external funding from the beneficiaries we serve. Already in some parts of the University, including in some of the areas of high-cost science research, we are close to achieving that objective, so it can be done. What makes this direction plausible as well is that the Accord encourages government funding schemes to pay the full cost of research.

There will, of course, be some types of public interest and discovery research where it will not be possible for it to fully funded. What is important is that we are transparent about what that work is and that the investments we make in it are aligned to our strategic priorities.

The third is we need to continue to increase the sources of income we receive from commercialisation and philanthropy. Over the long run these sources of income make a very valuable contribution to the University's ability to pursue the agendas it determines are important. In a highly managed system, that brings freedom that can be very important to ensuring excellence and our ability to chart the course we think is important in a world of many pressures.

The fourth is that we need to manage the previous elements of the formula to generate the amount we need each year to invest in our long-term IT systems, research equipment, facilities, laboratories and infrastructure plans so that they enable us to deliver on our strategies and achieve our mission. We calculate that to be about \$60-80m a year.

This simpler model will help collective understanding, ownership, and mutual accountability for us together to achieve a financially sustainable University with the foundation for reasonable workloads, recognising there are other things we will need to do as well to simplify the University to improve the experience of staff and students.

Our strategy will be to work together to create and run this 'right size model' as the basis for managing the University.

► **Goals and accountability:** To put this model in place, our goals are first, that each academic unit achieves a ratio of staff to units and students per unit that delivers a sustainable work-load and economics. Second, our portfolio of research projects and programs are at least 80% funded across the whole University. Third, Divisions and Academic Unit leadership deliver the services required, the whole of university support, and invest \$60-80m in capital each year, with the income generated by the sustainable economics of academic units and the other income the University generates from its investments, philanthropy, and commercialisation.

How do we organise ourselves to pursue our strategy?

We need to adapt the way we organise ourselves if the strategy is to be successful and the engagement and wellbeing of people is going to increase in ways that reflect our objective to be people centred. As we embark on this, four ideas are going to be important: devolved decision making, purpose, transitions, and regions.

We know well that the previous era of higher education reform created what are by global standards very large universities and that they have become bureaucratic and hierarchical with all too often competitive silos. We are no exception. That needs to change. The right size approach to economics and workload is a start.

Devolved decision making

To reduce hierarchy and bureaucracy we need to organise around the idea of subsidiarity, which is that decisions are taken at the level closest to those implementing the decision.

In practice that means trusting people more and devolving much greater responsibility to academic units from the college and divisional level to make good decisions at the local level that also consider the whole. In practice that means increased authority and the minimisation of approvals required above academic unit level and generally minimising the total number of approvals. With that responsibility comes accountability to deliver distinctive student experiences, success rates, and research outcomes. The strongest form that accountability will take is that in a managed system, an academic unit's long-term funding under the Accord reforms will be dependent on their delivery of those outcomes.

Purpose

For subsidiarity to be effective in delivering our mission, academic unit structures need to be organised around purpose. The way we organise needs to adapt to fit our strategic purpose rather than follow a standardised model. That can lead us to be configured in very different ways and at very different scales.

At one end, if we are going to play a critical role in transforming the Tasmanian health care system, and indeed make a major contribution to improving the national health care system, where all professions need to evolve together to create that system and its practice needs to be built on a strong research evidence base, then the academic units in health and medicine both in Tasmania and in Rozelle need to be well integrated around a common agenda. Where that is the shared purpose, subsidiarity will require the responsibility for those integrating decisions to be held at what today we would call a 'College level', although other decisions could be more local.

On the other hand, the professional education of lawyers, teachers and musicians has very little in common so the principle of subsidiarity would give these academic units a high level of autonomy to pursue their very different professional agendas.

What matters when it comes to purpose is not just what occurs at an academic unit level but what occurs at an individual level. We need to ensure that every staff member's work connects to the mission of the University as expressed in the purpose of their academic unit or division.

Transitions

The strength of subsidiarity is that it will bring much more of the decision making that directly affects people close to them. In the process it will effectively increase the autonomy of academic units but this approach needs every staff member to be able to articulate how they connect with the University's mission and how it impacts their day to day practice. The challenge is to make sure we can coordinate across these units successfully to pursue those five whole-of-University transitions and others we choose.

Again, there is no one size fits all model here. Today the Tasmanian Policy Exchange, the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Mission Integrator (ASOMI), and the Tasmanian Behavioural Lab are all very different examples of successful ways of organising across the University. We need to strengthen and continue to adapt these models but also find new ones including for more temporary or exploratory collaborations.

Regions

If we are to achieve our goal of increasing education participation and success in Tasmania then we need to organise around our Tasmanian regions and our Sydney presence. We need to ensure that organisationally we are solving for how we deliver our offerings statewide and in Sydney in response to the varying needs of each place and for how we make sure our student and staff experience in each of these places is distinctive and strong. That means we are not looking for one size fits all solutions but to make sure we are creating equivalent opportunities and impact in each region. The voice of regions needs to be far stronger in our planning than it has been in the past. Thinking of ourselves more as higher education system rather than a single large organisation will help us reimagine our approach to regions.



Communal spaces at The Shed, Inveresk campus, Launceston. ▲

What needs to underpin all we do

If we are to be true to our identity and successfully deliver our strategy there are three priorities that need to underpin all we do: safety and wellbeing, diversity, and building the culture we want.

Safety and Well-Being

The foundation of everything we do needs to be safety. No one should be injured physically or psychologically at work and no one should ever experience gender-based violence, sexual or any other form of discrimination. It is everyone's collective responsibility to ensure we have a safe workplace and have in place safe systems of work for all we do. As part of the process of ensuring safety and well-being at the University we will continue to develop, implement, monitor and publicly report on specific plans to address identified issues by our *Gender-Based Violence Action Plan*. Ensuring safety is an active project to ensure we are a workplace where wellbeing and inclusion are valued and promoted.

Equity in all our practices

If we are to be a university that creates access and equity for our students and addresses a range of inequalities in our Tasmanian community, we need to be inclusive and diverse in all ways, so our values are shared and consistent. We also recognise that it will be hard to be an inclusive place for students if their diversity is not mirrored in the diversity of our staff.

With that diversity comes the requirement to ensure equity in all our practices across our teaching, research, partnerships and operations. We will continue to evolve our practices, policies, training and support to provide equitable experiences and outcomes for students and staff across the University. This includes considering how we can provide an inclusive and supportive experience for neurodivergent students and staff.

While we have made progress in some areas of equity in the workplace, such as now having the second lowest gender pay gap in the sector, so long as there is still a gap, we have to relentlessly focus on closing it.

Building the culture we want

We recognise that there are different models of how organisations work. We need to deliberately choose what sort of culture we want. Over the last 12 months we have tested two models and from this have identified the mindsets, beliefs and values that we want to see in all we do at the University.

Our approach should start with an experiential understanding of the realities with which students and staff need to work, taking sustainability as a given, and holding global leadership as the standard we aspire to. When we respond to challenges, we will seek to involve, collaborate and empower whenever possible, owning the whole problem, working the whole problem and being joined up as a team.

Our solutions will assume goodwill, competence, and accountability. We will standardise where effective, take a proportionate approach to risk and monitor process outcomes rather than controlling process inputs. Where we face a tricky issue, we will think relationship first and interact in person rather than via email.

We will think of our third parties as partners rather than contractors, and if a service directly affects students and staff, we prefer to do it ourselves.

This collection of mindsets and assumptions is aimed at building trust within the organisation, and indeed requires it. It does mean that a breach of trust is not just 'breaking a rule' but brings into question the extent to which someone belongs within the organisation.

This set of mindsets and beliefs is not intended to be definitive or even particularly fixed but rather to give a sense of the direction we want to head in as we build a culture that will enable our mission, values, and strategy implementation if we are to be successful. We will use our annual Employee Engagement Survey to measure the evolution of the culture that we want, with the aim of continually improving employee engagement.



Greenhill Observatory, Bisdiee Tier, Tasmania. ▼

Strategic Plan – Outlook to 2050

Strategic theme	KPI	Target
Mission Focused	Professional courses rated against an ATEC* agreed scorecard to deliver the workforce Tasmania needs	Rated to 'meet needs'
	Percentage of international students	20% of our cohort are international students
	Percentage of total international students from a single country	Up to 33%
	Education: educational attainment	90% of Tasmanian students prepared for tertiary education by 2050 80% of working age population having a post-school qualification by 2050
	Health: Life expectancy Burden of chronic disease - disability-adjusted life years lost	Meets or exceeds national average by 2050 Reduced to below the national average by 2050
	Productivity: state productivity rate	Exceed the national average by 2050
	Climate: gross emissions	Tasmania is a world leader towards a zero-emission economy by 2040
	Tasmanian Stories	Increase in the publication and performance of Tasmanian Stories in all their forms.
Grounded in Indigenous excellence and knowledge	Comparative success rate of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students	Equal or better
	Percentage of Indigenous students and staff vs general population	Equal or better
Organised around sustainability	Deliver on agreed measurable sustainability objectives	Achieve and sustain Platinum Status in STARS Maintain high rankings in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (Climate Impact and overall ranking)
Characterised by a distinctive student experience and high-quality teaching in all we do	Student Experience Survey	At least 5pp above national average or improving until greater than 90%
	Student Employment Rate and Starting Salaries	Above the national average
Committed to research excellence and impact	Percentage of funding coming from 3 year or greater programmatic research	Greater than 90%
	Publications in Tier 1 Journals or Books	80% or greater
	Rolling average of invention disclosures a year.	Greater than 10
Ambitious about equity with excellence	Completion rates	70% by 2030
	Percentage of Tasmania students from equity cohorts compared to the proportion in the population.	Equal or higher
Regionally networked 'with' and 'in' the community	National campus experience survey	Experience at each campus is above national average
	Number of community members visiting and utilising our campuses	Year-on-Year increases
Collectively stewarding our university staff experience and economics	Ratio of staff to units and students per unit	Each academic unit achieves a ratio that delivers a sustainable workload and economics
	Portfolio of research projects and programs	At least 80% funded across the whole university
	EBITDA	\$60-80m
Our way of working	Lost Time Injuries	Zero
	Gender pay gap	Zero
	Employee engagement survey results	Results measurably improving

*Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC)



► Students conducting biological surveys on Maria Island.

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